

There is no better way to cap off such an incredible season, in which the Lady Pirates went undefeated, than with their first ever state championship title.

La Vega's Calveion Landrum, named MVP of the game, scored her team 23 points for her team as they defeated Argyle.

The Lady Pirates' coach, Amy Gillum, was finally able to achieve the goal she started pursuing as a player at La Vega 19 years ago.

The championship was won as a result of both the players' and coach's hard work and dedication to their basketball program.

I congratulate Coach Gillum on the victory that would not have been possible without her guidance and the devotion from her players and fans.

Mr. Speaker, before I close I just want to say congratulations to an outstanding Texas District 17 high school girls' basketball team, coaching staff, fans, and community.

Go Lady Pirates.

COMMEMORATING THE 150TH ANNIVERSARY OF OMEGA CHRISTIAN CHURCH

HON. SUSAN W. BROOKS

OF INDIANA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, March 11, 2014

Mrs. BROOKS of Indiana. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in recognition of the 150th anniversary of Omega Christian Church in Arcadia, Indiana. It is a pleasure to congratulate the church in celebration of this special occasion.

Omega Christian Church was founded during some of our Nation's darkest days, in 1863 during the midst of the Civil War. At the time of the church's founding, the area was known as Bethany, but later became called Omega and is now Arcadia. Exemplifying the best of the hardworking and enterprising Hoosier spirit, the residents built the church themselves using local timber. Joseph Lacy oversaw the construction, and Dr. Silas Blount gave the dedication sermon in November of 1863. It was in this humble wooden structure that Knowles Shaw (1834–1878), an early minister of the church who was a prominent evangelist and composer of religious music, wrote the hymnal "Bringing in the Sheaves."

In the years following the war, the community around Omega Christian Church began to grow and prosper. After construction was finished on the church, a sawmill, general store, resident doctor, blacksmith, and post office were also established. In 1926, sixty-three years after the completion of the original structure, the church was moved and enlarged to make room for the growing congregation. The framework and sanctuary of the church are original and are still in use today, making the Omega Christian Church the oldest building in White River Township.

The church continued to grow and expand throughout the following years, including major structural improvements. While the physical building may have changed and evolved, Omega Christian Church's mission remains the same from its founding in 1863: to serve God, to serve his people, and to be a light in the community where stability, comfort, strength, and family can be found, all in the name of Jesus Christ. Today I am proud to recognize this small country church and thank

them for their contributions to the spiritual well-being of their community. May the next 150 years be equally blessed.

DON'T SINK THE SHIP—A TALE OF TWO WWII BUDDIES

HON. TED POE

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, March 11, 2014

Mr. POE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, throughout life, people come and go. Some stay for a lifetime. Some you might wonder how, out of the billions of people in the world, you end up next to them again after 90 years with everything from a war and life's triumphs in between. It's a rare occurrence, but the life story of two World War II veterans right here in Houston, Texas.

Hymie Abramson and Milton "Mittie" Tartakov celebrated birthdays together for years. They were both born on June 6th, 1924, at St. Joseph's Hospital in Houston. The coincidence of their birth date and place are only the beginning of their life story. Twelve years later, Mittie and Hymie found each other again on the San Jacinto High School baseball field. And that's where their true story began.

Mittie was a talented middle infielder and Hymie a utility outfielder. They stuck together through all the games, practices, and championships. Whatever event it was, they stuck by each other. Little did they know, that was only preparing them for what was to come. Shortly after graduating high school, Mittie and Hymie received their draft cards. Though it wasn't quite a surprise given the demand in WWII, going off to war is never easy to process. Questions and doubts, rightfully so, arose, and they had each other to help answer them. The first question became Army versus Navy, with many to follow. Mittie's older brother served in the Navy and Hymie's older brothers served in the Army. But they decided the U.S. Navy was for them. When Hymie questioned Mittie about how happy he was with his decision to join the Navy over the Army, he grinned and said, "We're still alive, aren't we?" That became their life motto.

During a conversation with Mittie, he smirked and said, "We were two green-faced kids fresh out of high-school, who thought we were going to San Diego for boot camp where there would be beaches, sun and girls. So we gathered what little money we had and, with the shirts on our back, planned for our travels. But the Navy had other plans, in fact, we were sent to Chicago, in the dead of winter, to train on Lake Michigan." The two battled the brutal winter on Lake Michigan while preparing for War, having never been further from Houston than Lubbock. This was the first of many realities they would face during their service.

After training together, both Hymie and Mittie were commissioned as Aviation Machinist Mates for the same ship the USS *Savo Island*—an escort carrier departing from the Kaiser Shipyard in Astoria, Oregon, heading for the South Pacific. During this time, both men learned a lot. The USS *Savo Island* was nicknamed a "jeep carrier" because of the relatively small size of the aircraft carrier. It held 40 planes, 15 bombers called TBM Avengers, and 25 fighter planes. The Avengers were tor-

pedo bombers targeting enemy surface ships. They had internal fuel tanks in the wings for additional fuel storage that would allow them to travel farther distances. Additionally, they had Yehudi lights which were used to match the brightness of the sky creating counter-illumination camouflage. The camouflage would allow them to get closer to the enemy without being seen until they were within the 3,000 yard range. Quite a different life from the baseball field where they first "officially" met.

The journey was unpredictable for both of the men who, at this point, were basically brothers. Every day was different. One day, about 6-months into deployment, Mittie and Hymie were playing football. Given their love for sports, it was their way of unwinding but maybe not on this day. During a casual game of football, Hymie went for a pass and fell off the flight deck, causing him to break his leg. No break is a good break but the outcome for him wasn't exactly what he had hoped for. There was no other option but for him to be taken to the hospital on Tulagi Island. The two men were separated at this moment for several years.

The days weren't easy. Nights were warm and days registered around 120 degrees with the sun beaming down on the men. On those kinds of nights, Mittie would seek refuge from what felt like an inferno by sleeping on the flight deck instead of down below in the bunks. Most of the nights anyway, men would rarely sleep through the night as they always had to be on-guard: submarine attacks and bombers were a frequent occurrence. There was a critical shortage of tail-gunners during this time. The tail-gunner position was the most dangerous on the bombers. Enemy aircraft targeted this position often, as it was the most vulnerable on the plane. But Mittie volunteered for the position as a tail gunner. Courtesy of the TBM's camouflage, it was the most forward plane of the squadron, closest to the enemy and furthest from the ship. While Mittie was working as a tail-gunner down range, Hymie regained his health and was sent stateside to continue work as an aviation machinist for the remainder of the War.

The USS *Savo Island* made a remarkable journey, fighting in seven invasions. The last combat mission they fought was in Okinawa, where the ship's radar tower was hit by a kamikaze. From there, the ship sailed to Guam, and there it was repaired before traveling to Alaska for refuge. It was off the shores of Alaska when Mittie was finally told the great news: Victory over Japan. The USS *Savo Island* continued its voyage for port at Pearl Harbor. While in Hawaii, the Navy treated the men to a 6-month R and R before heading back home. But as far as Mittie was concerned, Houston, Texas, sounded more like paradise than Hawaii. Before he finally returned home, the USS *Savo Island* earned the Presidential Unit Citation—the highest honor a ship can earn. That marked the day Mittie was permitted to wear the ribbon with "the star" on his uniform.

In 1946, Mittie and Hymie were both discharged at Camp Wallace in Galveston, Texas. Shortly after being discharged, the two veterans joined A-Jayes, a young mens social club. Mittie went on to attend college at the University of Houston. Upon graduation, he began working for a lumber yard, of which he eventually took ownership. He renamed it Milton's Lumber and Building Co. It was a success for 53 years.